

Rowe Board of Selectmen Meeting
November 27, 2019
4:30 P.M.
Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

Board of Selectmen: Chair Charles Sokol, Vice-Chair Jennifer Morse, Selectman Ed Silva
Administrative Staff: Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Assistant to the Boards
Other Attendees: David Fierro, Town Accountant
Audience of Citizens: Joanne Semanie

Call to Order: Chair Sokol called the meeting to order at 4:30 P.M., a quorum of the board present.

Recording Devices: One recording device was noted.

Accounting: Members thanked Mr. Fierro for attending the meeting. About a month prior to the meeting Mr. Fierro had informed the Board that he was planning on resigning from his position as accountant. However, in subsequent discussions, he stated that he would potentially stay on if a hiring arrangement could be made between Rowe, Monroe, and Heath- three towns that he and his business currently provide services for.

Mr. Fierro stated that he had spoken with Monroe. They are on board with beginning discussions of a hiring arrangement. Heath's Board of Selectmen has also voted to enter discussions. It's clear that details of the arrangement will need to be figured out, but Mr. Fierro said that he would stay on until something is determined one way or another. Vice-Chair Morse volunteered to work on an intergovernmental agreement. Once this is completed, it will be sent to town counsel for review.

While Rowe may be able to shift funding around fairly easily to accommodate a new hire, concerns were raised about Heath's ability to do so mid-year. They may have to work it into next year's budget rather than begin sometime this year.

If an agreement could be reached that satisfied all parties, Mr. Fierro indicated that he would likely leave his role in North Adams, where he currently serves as auditor. In addition, should something happen that would result in his absence (illness, vacation, etc.), his business- Hill-Town Municipal Accounting Services, LLC, would be able to step in and cover for him.

In terms of technology he has been working remotely for the most part, which could help free up some office space for the treasurer. Administrative staff have been opening his lockbox and scanning all documents to him, and this process seems to be working well. He also said that he has used Vadar software in other towns. A grant has been applied for from the state to help pay for the software.

A draft proposal was presented that broke down Mr. Fierro's estimates of hourly needs by town, his rates, and the share each town would be responsible for, including benefits. He has not shown this to Monroe or Heath yet, but will do so. There would be a relatively large increase for Rowe, but the increases for Heath and Monroe would be minimal. The increase for Rowe would mainly be due to an average of 15 hours per week, whereas the town has usually budgeted 10-12. Even though each town would be allotted a certain number of hours and he lists an hourly rate, Mr. Fierro made it clear that the "bottom line" would be a flat fee- one price for however long it takes to do the job.

Treasurer: Members discussed how the transition to the new treasurer, Beverly Cooper, was going with Ms. Semanie. This is Ms. Semanie's last week as treasurer. She reported that they have worked on payroll a bit, but still need to work on reports, the checkbook, etc. Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau is working on getting Ms. Cooper's computer up and running, but there have been issues migrating the emails over to the new work station.

Selectman Silva reported that he has been hearing some concerns regarding Ms. Cooper's schedule thus far. After discussing a few matters, he agreed that he would follow up with Ms. Cooper to make sure everyone was on the same page and moving forward there would be a consistent schedule. For example, there will need to be a way for employees to get a hold of the treasurer during the week in case changes need to be made.

Ms. Cooper has suggested possibly shifting payroll companies. Ms. Semanie has opined that the only issue with doing so would be to ensure the integrity of the data the town currently has with Harper's.

Next Meeting: The Board will next meet on Thursday, December 5th to sign the warrant for the December 19th Special Town Meeting, as well as meet with the Gracy House Committee.

Warrants: Chair Sokol signed the vendor and payroll warrants.


Adjourn: With no further business to attend to:


MOTION TO ADJOURN: A motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 was made by Vice-Chair Morse, seconded by Chair Sokol, and passed unanimously (3-0-0) in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III
Administrative Assistant to the Boards

Approved on: 11/16/2020


Charles Sokol, Chairman


Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair


Edward Silva, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda
2. Wage/Benefit Proposal from David Fierro